DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 429 478 HE 031 853

AUTHOR MacFarland, Thomas W.
TITLE An Analysis of Final Grades for Selected Courses in the Fischler Graduate School of Education and Human Services: Differences between On-Campus and Off-Campus Students.
INSTITUTION Nova Southeastern Univ., Ft. Lauderdale, FL. Research and Planning.
REPORT NO R98-13
PUB DATE 1998-11-00
NOTE 26p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; College Instruction; *Distance Education; Education Majors; Extension Education; *Grades (Scholastic); *Graduate Students; Graduate Study; Higher Education; *Schools of Education; Teacher Education; Universities
IDENTIFIERS *Nova Southeastern University FL

ABSTRACT

This study examined differences in final course grades for campus-based and distance education students in the Graduate School of Education and Human Services at Nova Southeastern University (Florida). Data on 8,096 course grades for winter term 1997 were obtained from university records. It was found that students enrolled in courses offered through distance education received a significantly greater frequency of successful grades (A, B, C, or Pass) than their campus-based counterparts. However, for four key courses in the Ed.D. program for educational leaders, including programs in education and technology, programs for higher education, and the graduate teacher education program, off-campus students were in parity with on-campus students in terms of the relative frequency of successful grades. An appendix provides four sets of data tables. (MDM)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED 429 478

# AN ANALYSIS OF FINAL GRADES FOR SELECTED COURSES IN THE FISCHLER GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ON-CAMPUS STUDENTS AND OFF-CAMPUS STUDENTS

**Thomas W. MacFarland**

**Senior Research Associate**

**Nova Southeastern University**
**Research and Planning**

**Report 98-13**

**November 1998**

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

LAE U 31 .85-3

Thomas W. MacFarland

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Research and Planning provided the first comprehensive analysis of grades at Nova Southeastern University in 1996. Because of the way data were organized, it was not possible at that time to report grades based on place of class instruction (on-campus and off-campus).

Since then, Research and Planning has conducted analyses of grades by faculty affiliation status (full-time faculty and part-time faculty) and by place of class instruction (on-campus courses and off-campus courses). These analyses focused on courses taught during Winter Term 1997, with breakouts provided for each academic center.

The purpose of this report is to build on these studies and to report on grades by place of class instruction for selected courses in the Fischler Graduate School of Education and Human Services. Specifically, this report focused on key courses in the School's four programs that offer both on-campus instruction and off-campus instruction:

- Ed.D. Program for Educational Leaders

  EDL 8121 Evaluation

- Programs in Education and Technology

  RES 8433 Research and Evaluation II

- Programs for Higher Education

  ECD 8003 Curriculum and Program Planning

- Graduate Teacher Education Program

  EL 0600 Seminar in the Knowledge Base of Educational Leadership

Administrative staff in the Fischler Graduate School of Education selected these courses for analysis since they are broadly-representative core courses that were offered to both on-campus students and off-campus students during Winter Term 1997.

Following guidelines established by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools:

- All courses offered in either Broward County or Miami-Dade County were considered on-campus courses.

- All courses offered at other locations were considered off-campus courses.

This level of analysis should further support the University's many efforts to assess the comparability of campus-based courses to courses offered at distance education sites.

For all four courses, off-campus students were in parity with on-campus students in terms of the relative frequency of successful grades received. There were no instances where on-campus students received at a significant level ($p \leq .05$) a greater frequency of successful grades than off-campus students.

Using the frequency of successful grades as a unit of measure, this study provides a degree of evidence that off-campus students enjoy academic success that certainly meets the level of academic success experienced by on-campus students. To gain a better sense of academic achievement between on-campus students and off-campus students, this study offered the recommendation that the Fischler Graduate School of Education and Human Services should provide some type of common assessment (possibly a common final examination) in selected courses that are offered in both formats. Then, it would be possible to empirically determine achievement of on-campus students and off-campus students on an equivalent examination or other common assessment instrument.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS


| | Page |
|---|---|
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | ii |
| LIST OF TABLES | v |
| BACKGROUND | 1 |
| METHODOLOGY | 2 |
| RESULTS | 3 |
| SUMMARY | 3 |
| REFERENCES | 4 |
| APPENDIX: Tables 1 to 4 | 5 |

## LIST OF TABLES


| Table | | Page |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Summary of Successful Grades (A, B, C, Pass) and All Other Grades by Place of Class Location and by Academic Center: Winter Term 1997 | 6 |
| 2 | Summary of Winter Term 1997 Grades by Place of Class Location: Fischler Graduate School of Education and Human Services | 8 |
| 3.A | Summary of Winter Term 1997 Grades by Place of Class Location: EDL 8121 (Evaluation) | 9 |
| 3.B | Summary of Winter Term 1997 Grades by Place of Class Location: RES 8433 (Research and Evaluation II) | 10 |
| 3.C | Summary of Winter Term 1997 Grades by Place of Class Location: ECD 8003 (Curriculum and Program Planning) | 11 |
| 3.D | Summary of Winter Term 1997 Grades by Place of Class Location: EL 0600 (Seminar in the Knowledge Base of Educational Leadership) | 12 |
| 4 | Comparison of Successful Grades During Winter Term 1997 for Four Courses Offered On-Campus and Off-Campus | 13 |

## BACKGROUND

The Office of Research and Planning provided the first comprehensive analysis of grades at Nova Southeastern University in 1996 (*Grades at Nova Southeastern University. Fall Term 1993, Fall Term 1994, and Fall Term 1995*; 1996). A limitation of that report was that grades could only be reported by academic center and not by place of class instruction (on-campus and off-campus). Since then, Research and Planning has reported on grades by faculty affiliation status (*A Comparison of Final Grades Awarded by Full-Time Faculty and Part-Time Faculty by Academic Center for Winter Term 1997*; 1998) and by place of class attendance (*A Comparison of Final Grades Awarded in Campus-Based Courses and Courses Offered Through Distance Education for Winter Term 1997*; 1998).

The purpose of this report is to build on these studies and to report on grades by place of class instruction for selected courses in the Fischler Graduate School of Education and Human Services. Specifically, this report focused on key courses in the School's four programs that offer both on-campus instruction and off-campus instruction:

- Ed.D. Program for Educational Leaders

  EDL 8121 Evaluation

- Programs in Education and Technology

  RES 8433 Research and Evaluation II

- Programs for Higher Education

  ECD 8003 Curriculum and Program Planning

- Graduate Teacher Education Program

  EL 0600 Seminar in the Knowledge Base of Educational Leadership

Administrative staff in the Fischler Graduate School of Education selected these courses for analysis since they are broadly-representative core courses that were offered to both on-campus students and off-campus students during Winter Term 1997.

Guidelines established by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools were used to provide an operational definition of on-campus instruction and off-campus instruction:

- All courses offered in either Broward County or Miami-Dade County were considered on-campus courses.

During Winter Term 1997, 68.1 percent of all grades in the Fischler Graduate School of Education and Human Services were awarded in on-campus classes.

- All courses offered at other locations were considered off-campus courses.

  During Winter Term 1997, 31.9 percent of all grades in the Fischler Graduate School of Education and Human Services were awarded in off-campus classes.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for *Grades at Nova Southeastern University: Fall Term 1993, Fall Term 1994, and Fall Term 1995* (1996) was quite useful and the methodology for this report largely replicates the procedures used in that prior study:

1. The computing center provided the original extract file on November 11, 1997.

   This date provided an approximate four month interim from the end of Winter Term 1997 and the creation of the extract file, allowing sufficient time for adjustment to most *Incomplete* grades and the posting of any late grades.

2. The extract file was purposely prepared so that the five column cluster code for each course was identified, allowing for later discrimination between on-campus courses and off-campus courses.

3. Administrative staff in the Fischler Graduate School of Education and Human Services selected one broadly representative core course from each of the four programs that offer courses to both on-campus students and off-campus students.

4. Grades were organized into two separate categories:

   - Successful grades (A, B, C, and Pass)
   - All other grades

The chi-square test was then used to determine if there were differences in the frequency of successful grades awarded to on-campus students and off-campus students.

## RESULTS

Table 1 provides a degree of University-wide context to the frequency of successful grades and all other grades for on-campus students and off-campus students during Winter Term 1997. Table 2 focuses exclusively on the Fischler Graduate School of Education and Human Services and the frequency of successful grades and all other grades for on-campus students and off-campus students during Winter Term 1997. For the entire School, students enrolled in courses offered through distance education received a significantly greater frequency of successful grades than their campus-based counterparts.

Tables 3.A to 3.D specifically relate to the four courses selected for this study. For all four courses selected for this study, off-campus students were in parity with on-campus students in terms of the relative frequency of successful grades received. There were no instances where on-campus students received, at a significant level ($p \leq .05$), a greater frequency of successful grades than off-campus students.

## SUMMARY

The University is compelled by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to demonstrate that "[ ] its distance learning programs are effective and comply with all applicable *Criteria*" (*Criteria* for Accreditation; 1998, p. 40). The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools has further compelled the University to "Provide documentation that all distance learning courses are comparable to the on-campus courses and that the goals for each off-campus site are clear and explicit and are assessed regularly" (personal communication from J. T. Rogers, July 2, 1998).

This report, in parity with findings identified in *A Comparison of Final Grades Awarded in Campus-Based Courses and Courses Offered Through Distance Education for Winter Term 1997* (1998), provides a degree of evidence that off-campus students enjoy academic success that certainly meets the level of academic success experienced by on-campus students. Using the frequency of successful grades as a unit of measure, the findings of this report provide ample evidence that "distance learning courses are comparable to the on-campus courses."

To gain a better sense of academic achievement between on-campus students and off-campus students, this study offered the recommendation that the Fischler Graduate School of Education and Human Services should provide some type of standardized assessment (possibly a common final examination) in selected courses that are offered in both formats. Then, it would be possible to empirically determine achievement of on-campus students and off-campus students on an equivalent examination or other common assessment instrument.

## REFERENCES

*A Comparison of Final Grades Awarded by Full-Time Faculty and Part-Time Faculty by Academic Center for Winter Term 1997.* (1998). Fort Lauderdale, Florida: Nova Southeastern University. Research and Planning Report 98-09.

*A Comparison of Final Grades Awarded in Campus-Based Courses and Courses Offered Through Distance Education for Winter Term 1997.* (1998). Fort Lauderdale, Florida: Nova Southeastern University. Research and Planning Report 96-10.

*Grades at Nova Southeastern University: Fall Term 1993, Fall Term 1994, and Fall Term 1995.* (1996). Fort Lauderdale, Florida: Nova Southeastern University. Research and Planning Report 96-19.

*Criteria for Accreditation.* (1998). Decatur, Georgia: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

**APPENDIX:**

**Tables 1 to 4**

Table 1

Summary of Successful Grades (A, B, C, Pass) and All Other Grades by Place of Class Location and by Academic Center: Winter Term 1997

| Academic Center | Successful Grades: A, B, C, Pass | | All Other Grades | | p | Results of Chi-Square Analysis |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Campus | Distance | Campus | Distance | | |
| Farquhar Center for Undergraduate Studies | 6,687 | 3,348 | 1,390 | 505 | .001 | Students enrolled in courses offered through distance education received a significantly greater frequency of successful grades than their campus-based counterparts. |
| Fischler Graduate School of Education and Human Services | 4,906 | 2,421 | 605 | 164 | .001 | Students enrolled in courses offered through distance education received a significantly greater frequency of successful grades than their campus-based counterparts. |
| School of Business and Entrepreneurship | 1,973 | 1,807 | 288 | 93 | .001 | Students enrolled in courses offered through distance education received a significantly greater frequency of successful grades than their campus-based counterparts. |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Center for Psychological Studies . . . | 1,609 | 499 | 90 | 46 | .007 | There is no difference in the frequency of successful grades awarded between students enrolled in courses offered through distance education and students who are campus-based. |
| All Four Academic Centers with Both Campus-Based Courses and Distance Education Courses . . . . . | 15,175 | 8,075 | 2,373 | 808 | .001 | Students enrolled in courses offered through distance education received a significantly greater frequency of successful grades than their campus-based counterparts. |

Table 2

Summary of Winter Term 1997 Grades by Place of Class Location: Fischler Graduate School of Education and Human Services

| | Successful Grades | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A | | B | | C | | Pass | | Subtotal | | All Other Grades | | Total |
| Faculty Status | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N |
| Campus-Based Instruction | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Broward County | 2,595 | 60 | 948 | 22 | 96 | 2 | 141 | 3 | 3,780 | 88 | 526 | 12 | 4,306 |
| Miami-Dade County | 801 | 66 | 256 | 21 | 12 | 1 | 57 | 5 | 1,126 | 93 | 79 | 7 | 1,205 |
| Subtotal | 3,396 | 62 | 1,204 | 22 | 108 | 2 | 198 | 4 | 4,906 | 89 | 605 | 11 | 5,511 |
| Distance Education | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Subtotal | 1,462 | 57 | 264 | 10 | 12 | 0 | 683 | 26 | 2,421 | 94 | 164 | 6 | 2,585 |
| TOTAL | 4,858 | 60 | 1,468 | 18 | 120 | 1 | 881 | 11 | 7,327 | 91 | 769 | 9 | 8,096 |

Null Hypothesis: There is no statistically significant difference between campus-based courses and distance education courses regarding the frequency of successful grades and all other grades awarded ($p \leq .001$).

Finding: Chi-square = 43.95 and the Null Hypothesis is rejected ($p = .001$). Students enrolled in courses offered through the use of distance education received a statistically significantly greater frequency of successful grades than their campus-based counterparts.

Table 3.A

Summary of Winter Term 1997 Grades by Place of Class Location: EDL 8121 (Evaluation)

| | Successful Grades | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A | | B | | C | | Pass | | Subtotal | | All Other Grades | | Total |
| Faculty Status | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N |
| Campus-Based Instruction | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Broward County | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 18 | 90 | 18 | 90 | 2 | 10 | 20 |
| Miami-Dade County | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Subtotal | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 18 | 90 | 18 | 90 | 2 | 10 | 20 |
| Distance Education | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Subtotal | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 50 | 94 | 50 | 94 | 3 | 6 | 53 |
| TOTAL | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 68 | 93 | 68 | 93 | 5 | 7 | 73 |

Null Hypothesis: There is no statistically significant difference between on-campus course sections and off-campus course sections regarding the frequency of successful grades and all other grades awarded ($p \leq .05$).

Finding: Chi-square = 0.43 and the Null Hypothesis is accepted ($p = .513$).

Table 3.B

Summary of Winter Term 1997 Grades by Place of Class Location: RES 8433 (Research and Evaluation II)

| | Successful Grades | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A | | B | | C | | Pass | | Subtotal | | All Other Grades | | Total |
| Faculty Status | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N |
| Campus-Based Instruction | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Broward County | 18 | 62 | 11 | 38 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 29 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 29 |
| Miami-Dade County | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Subtotal | 18 | 62 | 11 | 38 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 29 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 29 |
| Distance Education | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Subtotal | 10 | 53 | 9 | 47 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 19 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 19 |
| TOTAL | 28 | 58 | 20 | 42 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 48 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 48 |

Null Hypothesis: There is no statistically significant difference between on-campus course sections and off-campus course sections regarding the frequency of successful grades and all other grades awarded ($p \leq .05$).

Finding: Chi-square can not be computed since there were zero observations for "All Other Grades" for both off-campus students and on-campus students. Accordingly, an inferential test is unnecessary for this analysis. All on-campus students received an "A, B, C, or Pass" and all off-campus students also received an "A, B, C, or Pass."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

## Table 3.C

### Summary of Winter Term 1997 Grades by Place of Class Location: ECD 8003 (Curriculum and Program Planning)

| | Successful Grades | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A | | B | | C | | Pass | | Subtotal | | All Other Grades | | Total |
| Faculty Status | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N |
| Campus-Based Instruction | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Broward County | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 32 | 94 | 32 | 94 | 2 | 6 | 34 |
| Miami-Dade County | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Subtotal | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 32 | 94 | 32 | 94 | 2 | 6 | 34 |
| Distance Education | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Subtotal | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 26 | 87 | 26 | 87 | 4 | 13 | 30 |
| TOTAL | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 58 | 91 | 58 | 91 | 6 | 9 | 64 |

Null Hypothesis: There is no statistically significant difference between on-campus course sections and off-campus course sections regarding the frequency of successful grades and all other grades awarded ($p \leq .05$).

Finding: Chi-square = 1.04 and the Null Hypothesis is accepted ($p = .307$).

## Table 3.D

**Summary of Winter Term 1997 Grades by Place of Class Location: EL 0600 (Seminar in the Knowledge Base of Educational Leadership)**

| | Successful Grades | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A | | B | | C | | Pass | | Subtotal | | All Other Grades | | Total |
| Faculty Status | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N |
| Campus-Based Instruction | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Broward County | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 24 | 89 | 24 | 89 | 3 | 11 | 27 |
| Miami-Dade County | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 53 | 98 | 53 | 98 | 1 | 2 | 54 |
| Subtotal | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 77 | 95 | 77 | 95 | 4 | 5 | 81 |
| Distance Education | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Subtotal | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 50 | 100 | 50 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 50 |
| TOTAL | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 127 | 97 | 127 | 97 | 4 | 3 | 131 |

Null Hypothesis: There is no statistically significant difference between on-campus course sections and off-campus course sections regarding the frequency of successful grades and all other grades awarded ($p \leq .05$).

Finding: Chi-square = 2.55 and the Null Hypothesis is accepted ($p = .111$).

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

**Table 4**

**Comparison of Successful Grades During Winter Term 1997 for Three Courses Offered On-Campus and Off-Campus**

| Course | Chi-square | p | Significant difference at $p \leq .05$ | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| EDL 8121 | 0.43 | .513 | No | Off-Campus = On-Campus |
| RES 8433 | n/a[1] | n/a | No | Off-Campus = On-Campus |
| ECD 8003 | 1.04 | .307 | No | Off-Campus = On-Campus |
| EL 0600 | 2.55 | .111 | No | Off-Campus = On-Campus |

[1] Chi-square can not be computed since there were zero observations for "All Other Grades" for both off-campus students and on-campus students. Accordingly, an inferential test is unnecessary for this analysis. All on-campus students received an "A, B, C, or Pass" and all off-campus students also received an "A, B, C, or Pass."